

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) offered the following statement in opposition to an amendment to cut funding for Chesapeake Bay clean-up efforts, included in House Republicans' spending bill for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2011:

"I rise today in strong opposition to the Goodlatte amendment which would take a giant step backward in our efforts to restore the health of our nation's largest estuary – the Chesapeake Bay.

"For centuries, the Bay has played an important role in shaping the cultural, economic, political, and social history of our region. Unfortunately, the Chesapeake Bay of 2011 is not the pristine body that Captain John Smith first charted on his expeditions some 400 years ago.

"Last year, the Chesapeake Bay Program released its annual Health and Restoration Assessment which found, in spite of some improvements, the overall health of the Bay remained degraded and that we are still far short of most restoration goals. The ability of the Bay and all of the creatures that live within it to thrive has been significantly hampered by nutrient and sediment pollution from a variety of sources.

"Because past voluntary agreements have failed to adequately reduce nutrient and sediment pollution, the EPA was directed by a federal judge to establish a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) to limit nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment for the Bay watershed. Based off of plans submitted by the six watershed states and the District of Columbia, EPA issued its final TMDL at the end of last year. It established a 2025 deadline for achievement of the final reduction goals.

"The paths to achieving these goals have been established by the states themselves. The EPA will only become engaged if the states are unable to meet these goals. Mr. Goodlatte's amendment would prevent the EPA from moving forward with the TMDL. And, as written, it would also appear to prohibit any additional federal assistance, such as Agriculture Conservation Dollars or STAG grants, from assisting the states from meeting their restoration plans.

“Will there be costs associated with meeting the goals? Absolutely, but the costs will be far greater if we do nothing at all.

“Nearly every summer, some percentage of the Bay is classified as being “dead.” Fish, crabs, and oysters are unable to breathe due to lack of oxygen in these dead zones. The larger the dead zone becomes, the smaller the economic benefits of the Bay as a fishery or recreational or tourist attraction, and the greater the number of related jobs we lose.

“We are now on a path designed to stem this tide and it would be imprudent to kill this plan before it has an opportunity to truly have an impact.

“I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing this short-sighted amendment and fighting to restore this magnificent natural resource.”